

Eugênio Lopez Sanchez, the great defender of Physical Therapy in Brazil

Eugênio Lopez Sanchez was born in Malaga, Spain, on February 24, 1924 and came to Brazil in 1954. He began his training as physical therapist in 1957, in the first program of physical therapy in the country, sponsored by the Raphael de Barros study center, whose goal was to train technicians in physical therapy. The program lasted one year. The Institute of Rehabilitation (IR) was created in 1958, attached to the Chair of Orthopedics and Traumatology of the Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade de São Paulo (FM-USP), where it began the first program of physical therapy with minimum international standard and a duration of two years, to meet the rehabilitation programs that the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was interested in developing in Latin America.

His career as physical therapist and professor began on that program. He was a physical therapist at the Hospital das Clínicas and professor of physical therapy at the Faculdade de Medicina da USP from 1958 to 1991, when he retired.

His participation in Brazilian Physical Therapy was indisputable and decisive for the growth and regulation of the profession. He founded the Brazilian Association of Physical Therapy (ABF) in August 19, 1959 and, three years later, affiliated to the World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT). In ABF, he took over several positions: Scientific Director, Secretary, Vice-President and President.

The profession of physical therapist was legally recognized by Decree no. 938 of October 13, 1969, due to efforts of ABF. However, its application was blocked because of lack of regulation: there was no legal instrument that would create the Councils of the occupation. To achieve this goal, ABF fought tirelessly for seven years until the adoption of Law no. 6,316, of December 17, 1976, which created the Federal Council of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy (COFFITO) and the Regional Councils of Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy (CREFITO). However, the

education area was still deficient. The Education Committee of ABF elaborated the minimum curriculum project approved by Resolution no. 44, of February 28, 1983, fixing the minimum content and the duration of the programs of physical therapy and occupational therapy.

In 1959, the World Health Organization (WHO), the PAHO and the WCPT organized, in Mexico, the first Latin American program for professors of schools of Physical Therapy. Brazil sent two physical therapists who taught in FM-USP, Danilo Vicente Define and Eugênio Lopez Sanches, both holding a master's degree in physical therapy by this same institution.

He also had an outstanding performance as physical therapist. For example, the attention given to Assis Chateaubriand, one of Brazil's most influential public men in the decades of 1940 to 1960, paraplegic due to a stroke in 1960. He was accompanied by professor Eugênio until his death in 1968.

All these achievements had great influence of Eugênio Lopez Sanchez, who was my professor, mentor and friend, and the proof of this is that we maintained a strong friendship over the years.

I still remember when I was teaching the program of Physical Therapy at FM-USP in 1991. Eugênio retired and, before leaving, he called me and said: "I'm retiring and I want you to take care of my subject, the one that I love the most in the program: Introduction to Physical Therapy". I take care of it until today and, Eugênio, rest assured that I will continue taking care of it while I'm here. I appreciate every day the friendship and the teachings that you left to the Brazilian Physical Therapy.

You left us in June 27, 2017, but your memory will be eternal. On behalf of all Brazilian physical therapists, thank you very much!

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